



Asian American Federation
of New York

July 13, 2004

Chairman Michael Powell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket 03-133

Dear Chairman Powell,

On behalf of the Asian-American Federation of New York, I am writing to urge the FCC not to impose new, hidden access charges and fees on pre-paid telephone calling cards. These calling cards are an important means for Asian-Americans, particularly those on low and fixed incomes, to stay in touch, and increasing the cost of these services will hit many of Asian-Americans hard and directly in the pocketbook.

A recent study by AAFNY showed that more than 80% of Asian senior citizens in New York City have limited English skills, and that one-quarter live below the poverty line. For low-income or fixed-income consumers, prepaid calling cards are frequently the most economic means of staying in touch with friends and family. In addition, many Asian-Americans are more comfortable with pre-paid telephone service as they know exactly how much they will be paying for the service rather than receiving a bill at the end of each month. As a result, the Asian-American community is among the fastest-growing markets for pre-paid calling cards, with 10% of Asian-American households having used these cards.

But the benefits of calling cards are now at risk, and members of the Asian-American community may soon see prices for these cards increase, simply so large local telephone companies can collect inflated "access charges" on this service. At a time in which gas costs over \$2 per gallon and the cost of other consumer products are rising, the Asian-American community should not be asked to take money from its pockets to place it in the hands of some of the largest companies in America.

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I urge the Commission not to add new access charges and other fees to pre-paid calling card services. If you do, many of the nation's most price-sensitive telephone consumers will immediately feel the burden.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director

ccs: Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Kathleen Abernathy
Commissioner Kevin Martin
Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein
Senator Charles Schumer
Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton